The

# Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

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## Notes of the Month.

In a short time the benefits of our Irish Sustentation Fund will be available for the ministers of our congregations, for next month the scheme made practicable by the generosity of many members of our Church will come into operation. It is true that the amount already contributed falls somewhat short of what we had hoped, yet it means much that sufficient has been received to allow of a good start. The probability is that when in operation the fund will so markedly justify the object of its promoters and well-wishers as to win for itself increased support, thereby adding each year to the amount payable to each minister. But it must be borne in mind that congregations have their duty to perform before their ministers are qualified to participate in the benefits of the fund. That is, each congregation must in June pay one-half of its annual contribution, the latter representing five per cent. of the stipend received each year by the minister from all sources, not including the manse. Such contributions, together with the interest from the invested capital, will be divided equally amongst the ministers whose congregations have duly qualified in the manner indicated. The first half-yearly disbursement to ministers will fall early in July, the second, early next year. If the treasurers of our congregations will please remember that their prompt payment of the congregational contributions will greatly facilitate the prompt receipt of benefits by the ministers, we feel sure that they will not be found behind. We hope from the Sustentation Fund the greatest possible blessing, not only for ministers, but for all the members of our Non-Subscribing Church.

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By the death of Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence the Unitarian community lost a most devoted member and generous supporter. Unlike many who had become possessed of great wealth, he showed not the least inclination to conceal his Unitarianism, or to withdraw from strenuous participation in its varied activities. On the contrary, he cheerfully undertook new and more exacting responsibilities, labouring up to the very limits of his energetic personality on behalf of many good causes. While he did not confine his charitable services within the limits of his own religious

body, he nevertheless felt that the latter had a first claim upon his consideration. Only those who had occasion to approach him on behalf of some deserving institution could know how prompt and unstinted was his response when once convinced of the need of his help. Others may, perchance, think of his eccentricities, such as his enthusiastic advocacy of the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare's plays, but we would rather recall his kindly personality, his discriminating philanthropy, his ever fearless advocacy of Unitarianism.

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The visit of King George and Queen Mary to Paris was characterised by the most propitious of circumstances. Perfect weather prevailed, thus giving full effect to the lavish artistic preparations made for entertaining the Royal visitors, and permitting the Parisians to take full advantage of their opportunities to see and to greet their guests. In the ability to organise and carry through a great demonstration the French people are perhaps second to none, but on this occasion they seemed to have surpassed themselves. Most significant, however, was the popular enthusiasm, showing how the Entente Cordiale is not a mere instrument of the politician, but a true expression of public feeling. When one remembers that next year will mark the centenary of the Battle of Waterloo, with all its memories of past international rivalries and animosities, how consoling it is to think that not only has time softened such animosities but has made possible the growth of that spirit of trust and mutual good-will which will make difficult, if not impossible, their revival. Well might our King and Queen, ardently desirous of peace and its blessings, be profoundly impressed by the warmth of the welcome accorded them in Paris.

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It must be a source of bitter disappointment to President Wilson, of the United States, to see his period of office so soon darkened by the prospects of war in Mexico. On the admission of friends and political opponents alike, he is a man of strong pacific aims and tendencies, earnestly desirous of promoting the true welfare of his people, and yet, despite himself, he is confronted by a most serious and complicated situation. Mexico, with its unstable and volatile population, its frequent changes of government, its military despotism, has long been the despair of the statesman. Yet warlike methods of repression are likely to accomplish little and may easily cost the United States a terrible price in the loss of valuable lives. We can, therefore, only hope that, black as the present prospect appears, means may be found of settling the unfortunate dispute before the many interests involved, not excluding those of Great Britain, greatly suffer. We shall then be in a better position to let our minds dwell upon the thought of that period of peace which for a century has reigned uninterrupted between ourselves and our American brethren. Perhaps it may be possible for our Government to serve the purposes of mediation and promote the cause of peace.

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All who are interested in the work of our Sunday Schools, and are anxious to encourage the same, should make a note of the fact that the Annual Conference will be held this year at Ballycarry early in June. An attractive centre, the hearty welcome that will await us there, and an interesting programme, should combine to make this year's Conference a great success.

## RELIGION AND MODERN THOUGHT.

### III. Revelation and Inspiration.

By Rev. G. L. Phelps.

We cannot get very far in any discussion of religion without facing the question : Where is the seat of authority ? The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church owes its existence to the insistence of its members on "the inalienable right of every Christian to search these records of Divine Truth

(the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) for his own instruction and guidance, to form his own opinions with regard to what they teach, and to worship God in sincerity, agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience, without privation, penalty, or inconverience inflicted by his fellow-men." Well and good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. In the first place it is not so much a question of right as of duty and necessity; and secondly, the way in which this article of our Constitution is worded leaves us open to misunderstanding, it would appear that we place the seat of authority in the Bible. The Roman Catholic will tell you that he has searched the Scriptures and formed his own opinion with regard to what they teach, and his opinion is that they teach that Divine Truth has been entrusted to the keeping of his Church, so that infallibility is to be found only in the Pope, as the head of the Church. The orthodox Protestant will tell you that he has searched the Scriptures and formed his own opinion with regard to what they teach, and his opinion is that they teach that Divine Truth was revealed in the Bible, which is therefore to be our infallible authority. If you stop short at "the inalienable right to search the Scriptures," there will be many who claim that in the exercise of their right they have found warrant for accepting as Divine Truth doctrines or texts which they do not profess to understand, and which call forth no response from their consciences. Those who regard religion as a body of doctrine or a collection of precepts are in the same position as the priests who put to Jesus the question—"By what authority doest thou these things?" They received no direct answer, because the very asking of the question revealed a misunderstanding as to the nature of religion; they expected to be given the authority of some chapter and verse or of some acknowledged lawgiver or prophet, but familiarity with such authority does not make a man religious. The words of Job go to the root of the matter—"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but *now* my eye seeth Thee, therefore do I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." What is required for religion is not a second-hand knowledge of God, not the dogmas or dictates of an infallible oracle, the hearing of God by the hearing of the ear, but the personal conviction of reality which Job speaks of as seeing God, and which produces a complete change of feeling and outlook. The question with which we are at present concerned is how can we attain unto this conviction?

There could be no religion had not the spirit of God been breathed into man. We should begin by taking to heart the profound words of Pascal—"Take comfort; thou wouldst not be seeking Me hadst thou not already found Me." There is that in human experience which can only be explained or accounted for by the belief that spirit with spirit can meet—the Spirit of God with the spirit of man. Quite apart from expediency, we set a high value upon truth and goodness; we may not always act up to our instinctive beliefs as to the supreme value of truth and goodness; we may not have the courage or constancy to pursue them at all costs, but it is part of our human nature that we should desire them. We could not desire truth and goodness were there not something corresponding to them within ourselves. These desires, aspirations, longings are for God, for God is eternal Truth and Goodness. Inspiration is not confined to some few specially favoured people in ancient times; if we were without inspiration we should remain without personal religion. Inspiration is the spirit by which we have access to the Father. The beginnings of inspiration must be found within ourselves.

It is a mistake to regard inspiration as miraculous; it is of course wonderful, as is the growth of a flower, but it is not unnatural. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." Yes, but though we cannot trace the path of the wind, we know that path is traced by law, and not by chance.

A revelation of truth or a prompting to duty may come in a manner we cannot distinctly trace, but it does not follow that there has been any departure from the orderliness of natural law. There are many well authenticated instances of sudden inspiration in the realm of science. Kepler made discoveries in astronomy which revolutionised that science. The solution of the great problem at which he had been working for years came suddenly and unaccountably; he had had many failures; he had been on the wrong track; for twenty-two years he theorised and calculated, then the truth dawned upon him. The truth dawned upon him rather than upon another, because of the intensity of his endeavour As he said, "I brooded with the whole energy of my mind on the subject." Only by such men of concentration are discoveries made. Many a man had seen an apple fall. Newton learned the law of gravitation, not because an apple fell, but because years of resolute purpose in the cause of scientific truth had prepared him at last to grasp the law by which the apple fell. It is the same in art, poetry, and music; we cannot say exactly when and to whom the flash of inspiration will come, but it never comes to the inartistic, the unpoetical, or the unmusical. Whole-hearted devotion and the conscientious use of what is already possessed are necessary before there can be any inspiration. The Brownings did not idly wait for the moving of the spirit, but went at regular hours to their desks and gave their minds intently to their work. Exercise and discipline prepare the way for inspiration. The inspirations of religious truths and ideals work in the same way. We can know something of the things of God, because we have something of the Spirit of God. Our range of knowledge and of vision will not be extended, unless we use that which we have and are intent on the things of God with something of the intensity and singleness of purpose exhibited by those to whom have come the inspirations of science, poetry, or music. "If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me, ye shall ever surely find Me." If we wish not merely to hear of God, but to know Him, we must exercise our spiritual faculties. If we render our utmost to the highest we know we shall acquire power to catch glimpses of heights that are higher.

What then of revelation? If religious insight is dependent upon inspiration in the individual, if we can only learn of the things of God by means of the spirit of God in us, if it is not only a right but a duty to follow the dictates of our own consciences, of what use to us is the Bible, the teachings and example of Jesus, and the accumulated experiences of the ages as set forth in the creeds and confessions of Christendom? Let us turn again to the analogy of science. In studying the laws of physical nature we have not each to begin at the very beginning and find out everything for ourselves. Observation and experiment on the part of the people of past ages have yielded certain results which are found to work. We have no need to go over the same ground again; we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness, but for all that, we accept these results, not in blind trust, but because we can understand them, and, if we like, verify them. In religion, too, we have no need to begin as though we were the first or the only people to live on this earth; we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to others and accept what we can appreciate and verify. Our powers of appreciation and verification certainly include reason and conscience; it is by using them that we sift the chaff from the grain.

In the Bible we have, as was pointed out in last month's article, "an incomparable collection of writings . . . exhibiting God's progressive revelations to mankind through the medium of a particular people." Revelation is necessarily progressive because the receptive powers of man develop. We can trace the development in the Bible itself. There are crude conceptions of God and duty, as well as beautiful and sublime thoughts within its pages. Jesus did not hesitate to set on one side some of the things taught "by them of old time." We approach the Bible with reverence

because it has been found of value by so many generations of mankind, but it is only an authority to us when it awakens a response within ourselves. In vain does superior wisdom and goodness exist if there be no powers of perceiving the true and the good. Those who find in Jesus their supreme religious teacher do so not because any book or institution makes that claim on his behalf, but because contact with his spirit brings elevation and enlightenment by quickening our spiritual powers. As an artist studies the works of the masters, not simply to slavishly reproduce, but to learn the methods and catch the spirit, which will enable him to do his own artistic work better, so we should turn to sacred writings and great personalities not for a ready-made theology, not for a fixed moral code, not for a stereotyped pattern, but to learn from inspired men how we too may be inspired to learn from those who attained close communion with God how that communion may be ours also.

The matter has been excellently put in a book, entitled : " What is Faith ? " by J. H. Skrine—" A man's salvation is measured by the degree in which he is alive. Is he alive on the side of the mind ? Does the organ, by which he is sensible of the world of fact, adjust its activities to the arrangement of those facts ? Does it mirror things as they are and not as he would wish them to be ? Is he alive on the side of emotion ? Is there an answer of the heart to the relations of that nearest environment—Humanity ? Has he love, which is the response to the fact of a brotherhood encircling him ? Are his sympathies quick, and does a neighbour's grief stir pity in him and his joy a joy ? Is he alive on the side of action ? Does the movement of the practical order—the thing that is done upon earth—stir a vibration in his will ? Do the things that God does Himself—His work seen in the process of nature and in the state—find him a fellow-worker ? Does he by his activity propel, and by his passivity smooth, the march of betterment ? To do and be these things is to be alive ; and to live is to be in Faith."

## HAVE WE A MESSAGE FOR TO-DAY ?

By Rev. M. S. Dunbar, M.A.

THE interrogatory form in which my subject has been put for me shows that we are free inquirers, who are quite willing to listen either to an affirmative or a negative answer. For my part, it is a long time since first I gave an affirmative answer to the question, and in the intervening years I have never doubted it.

By the term " message " I think we mean something important and something distinctive, that is not such a message as we may have in common with others, but one which distinguishes us from others. Being a religious body, it must also be a religious message.

The religious body to which we belong had its origin in Ireland, as elsewhere, in a protest and a claim. The protest was against the imposition of a creed on the teachers of religion, and the claim made was : the right of the human mind to freedom. This right was just the principle of Protestantism over again, viz., the right of private judgment ; and the protest was against what we considered inconsistent with that principle—imposing a creed on the ministers and members of the Church Twice has this protest been made in our island : first in 1726, when the Antrim Presbytery took up a free position, and again in 1830, when another group of Non-Subscribers had to withdraw from their Church connexion, who took the name of Remonstrants. These all made the same claim to mental liberty ; and their successors, preserving their spirit and their fundamental principle, though not, it may be, holding their precise views on all religious questions, are now united under the name of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The name reveals the principle that unites us. We subscribe to no creed, because we claim the right to follow the truth wherever it leads us, and believe that powers to know and judge the truth have been given us,

accompanied by a responsibility which we cannot get rid of, the renunciation of which no vow, however solemn, can ever make binding. Knowing the results of this freedom in the history of our Church, and in the experience of our own lives, and the results of the want of it in other Churches, we still remain firm adherents to our principle of freedom, and after the lapse of these two centuries we bear to the Christians of other Churches the same message as our predecessors, viz., this : we have claimed our freedom, you ought to claim yours.

Our message is first of all to the ministers in the Churches. It may seem an arrogant position to assume for me, or anyone amongst us, or all of us together, to counsel our ministerial brethren in other Christian communities as to what they should or should not do. But this message of ours ought not really to give offence to our fellow-Christians of other denominations. If it ventures to point out their duty, it at the same time boldly advocates their right. Rejoicing in the liberty we have, we want them to enjoy it also. The message makes no claim to special privilege in the way of Divine revelation, and it is accompanied by no threat should it be disregarded. We presume not, we threaten not, as others sometimes do when they declare their message to us, but we appeal to every man's own judgment when we say to our ministerial brethren—" As teachers of religion, you ought to be free to form your own beliefs and to give utterance to your own conscientious convictions."

A teacher in any department of thought is understood to be giving, not simply what he has read or heard, but what he has verified. He is understood to be giving the results of his own best thought on the subject.

The religious teacher has to deal with two kinds of truths. The one is historical facts which rest on evidence which has to be judged by the intellect. The other kind of truths are moral and religious, which make their appeal to the heart and conscience, and have to be judged by these faculties and by our own inward experience. The teacher must have the requisite knowledge before he can teach convincingly the truths that rest on external evidence, and he must have the requisite feelings and experience before he can preach convincingly those truths which rest on internal evidence. He must have verified the truths he proclaims in his own mind and heart and conscience. Only such beliefs are convictions, and only with convictions can we teach and preach religion to our own satisfaction or to that of our people. And how shall we get convictions but by being free to look at the matter from all points of view and judge what is best and truest ? If the door should be closed on any side of the compartment of thought to which our attention is turned, we cannot say that we have looked through it, and are convinced that we carry away with us the best truth it contains. It is impossible to have convictions unless we have perfect freedom of inquiry, and use our privilege to the best of our ability.

But my orthodox friend would probably say—" True, one must examine freely before coming to a conclusion, but that is just what I did. I gave religious questions my most serious thought, looked at all sides as far as I could ; not till then did I make up my mind. I signed the creed, believing it. It cannot be wrong to subscribe to what one honestly believes. How then can you say that I am not free ?" With every consideration and sympathy for the difficulties of the position, we would reply—We think you did wrong, though unwittingly, for this reason, because by that act you threw tremendous obstacles in the way of your acting conscientiously should doubt at any future time arise regarding any one of the statements which you had sworn to maintain. And the risk of this contingency arising, you might have known, was great, because the creeds are composed of statements of the two kinds I have just mentioned—those which are based on external and those which are based on internal evidence, and both these kinds of evidence are liable to vary in course of time. What are

thought to-day to be historical facts may be rendered erroneous or uncertain to-morrow by new discoveries, and individual experience changes with the years, so that doctrines or theories of doctrines which seemed true to our inward experience in youth may appear in a different light to riper experience. Religion, being a personal thing, is not a subject which admits of strict definitions for all men and all time. Compulsory creeds are out of place here. No one—at least no one who keeps his eyes open—can say that he will believe exactly the same twenty years hence. Therefore, we think no man is justified in stereotyping his thought by signing a creed at any period of his life, and more especially it astonishes us that young men of three or four-and-twenty should consent to do so, or should be ever asked to do so. They should be free, not only up to that age, but *all the time.* Men of science have no creed to sign ; our subject has been called the Queen of the Sciences ; then why should we ?

We often find strange reasoning employed when the imposition of creeds has to be defended by those who have subscribed them. No less a man than the late Professor Flint was reported many years ago to have said in a lecture given in Edinburgh University that he was no more hampered by the Confession of Faith than a man of science was by his adhesion to the axioms of Euclid. How many of the propositions found in the Confession are comparable in their self-evidencing qualities to the axioms of Euclid ? These are not the kind of statements that need to be put into the creeds ; there is no fear of anyone denying them. Some must find their way in, because religion has many truths which are self-evident to the religious mind. But what men put into the creeds for the most part are not axioms, but more or less doubtful facts and questionable theories, which it is difficult to get men to believe. It is these that are characteristic of all creeds, and not the self-evident propositions. But even had the Confession consisted entirely of axiomatic truths, the Professor was not as free as the man of science, for the latter had made no vow to hold for ever the axioms of Euclid, but was free to controvert them if he could ; and had he been able to find a flaw in them, there was no previous obligation to interfere with him making known the fact.

A minister of the Church of Scotland once said to me, " Freedom in the pulpit means tyranny in the pews." I have not found it so. Our ministers always let it be clearly understood by those whom they address that they must judge for themselves, and reject the minister's word if they think it wrong, or suspend their judgment if they think it doubtful. Freedom in pew is as real with us as freedom in the pulpit. And our mutual rights do not clash and do not produce schism, because we are bound together by a common love and pursuit of truth.

This brings me to say that our message is not only to the ministers of the Churches, but also to the laity. To them we bring the same message—" You ought to be free from the bondage of creeds, and you ought to grant this freedom of thought and speech to your teachers." The layman may reply that he is free, and to some extent that is true. He is free to change his beliefs and go elsewhere ; the same penalty will not follow him as would follow his minister. He may even remain where he is if he retain a discreet silence, and that is not difficult, for he is not required to speak. This is true of the masses in orthodox congregations, but it is not true of those who rule in the Church. The laymen who rule are fettered equally with the ministers, and to them we say—" This is a condition which ought not to exist. For your own sake, for the minister's sake, and for the truth's sake, there should be freedom both in pulpit and in pew." With how much greater power and authority would a minister's word come to you if you were sure that it was what he believed in his inmost soul, after the freest inquiry ? How much greater, too, would be his authority with those who disbelieve so much of what is generally preached ! The unanimity of thousands of pulpits has no

weight with thoughtful people when they know that their occupants were taken when they had hardly more than passed out of boyhood and bound to certain conclusions—to creeds which are not confined to great principles, but which enter into details and spread over the whole field of theology. Who could withstand orthodox unanimity if it came from free minds and free lips? It is the consensus of free, not of fettered, minds that gives authority. It is a matter of general knowledge that an increasing number of ministers in all the Churches are ready for this freedom. They are in many quarters restless under their yoke, and are crying out against it. What did a Professor of Divinity in Cambridge say the other day? "We demand from our Bishops permission to speak the truth in the Church as elsewhere." Good, but what a state of things does it reveal when it is necessary for those appointed to teach to ask permission of any man to speak the truth. Surely that is a permission which has been granted to us already, nay, laid upon us as a solemn obligation by the God who made us in His image. We believe there are many who, by the force of circumstances, are still bearing the yoke, but who sympathise with us and look forward, as we do, with hope, though it may be often weakened by something like despair, to the time when it can be said of all the religious teachers in the land what was said of our common Master—"We know that thou art true, and carest for no man, for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth."

I select the following passage from Dr. Carpenter as well expressing what I take to be our distinctive message for to-day, and probably for many a day to come—"It is not only the Professors of Divinity for whom liberty is an essential condition. Behind the ideal of free teaching in theology lies another—more important still—that of a Free Church, where pastor and people shall be alike pledged only to a common pursuit of truth and a common recognition of veracity as the first requisite of worship. To such a goal the path is long and difficult. A thousand obstacles of association and affection, of anxiety and apprehension, threaten it. Which of the great historic Churches in this country will make the first step? Of one thing they may be assured by those who have trodden it through toil and obscurity for more than two hundred years. Though they should suffer loss, obloquy, and exclusion, they will never wish to turn back."

## THE ULSTER UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

### ANNUAL MEETING.

### "The Message of Unitarians."

The Annual Meeting of the Ulster Unitarian Christian Association was held in the Central Hall, Rosemary Street, Belfast, on Monday, April 5th, when a large number of members and friends of the Association assembled. The proceedings followed the order of former years, except that two special addresses were arranged on "The Message of Unitarians to the Present Age," by the Revs. M. S. Dunbar, M.A., of Downpatrick, and D. J. Williams, of Killinchy. The chair was occupied by the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., and the Committee's Annual Report was presented by the Junior Hon. Sec., Rev. G. J. Slipper. The report stated that the work of the Association had been steadily maintained throughout the year, and expressed the Committee's appreciation of the efforts of their agent, Mr. E. Gordon, to promote the usefulness of the Association. They regretted the resignation from the Committee of Mr. John Rogers and Mr. G. G. Ward, the former through ill-health, the latter owing to removal from the city, and deplored the loss by death of several subscribers. Certain reprints of the Association's publications were contemplated, and the Committee felt the future was full of hope and promise. The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. C. J. M'Kisack, presented the Annual Statement of Accounts, which showed a satisfactory credit balance—

a condition of things, as was pointed out, which must not be taken to imply that the Association does not need the support of members and friends since various developments in the work of the Association are contemplated.

The Chairman, in proposing the adoption of the Report and Statement of Accounts, dwelt upon the two-fold aspect of the work of the Association. It endeavoured to meet the demand for literature expository of the faith and principles of Unitarians, and it also kept in view the desirability of initiating and supporting missionary effort as opportunity arose. With regard to the first point, he regretted that the demand for theological literature was not what it ought to be. But they were not alone in having to deplore this fact ; the same comparative indifference was noticeable in the theological department of one of the City Libraries with which he was associated. And with regard to the missionary aspect of the work the Association, he said they were becoming more and more convinced that if the people did not come to the Church it was the duty of the Church to go to the people. The Rev. E. H. Pickering seconded, and referred with approval to the Committee's decision to reprint "The Child's Guide to Christ." He had felt the need of a catechism for children, and he thought the catechism referred to might serve a very useful purpose. The motion, which included an expression of gratitude to the local collectors of the Association, was passed unanimously. A resolution offering a cordial welcome to Belfast to the Rev. W. Copeland Bowie, of London, was then proposed by Mr. Bowman Malcolm, seconded by Mr. Hugh Hunter, and heartily passed, and Mr. Bowie spoke a few words in reply. He referred to the need of remembering that, although Unitarians were obliged to work together in comparatively small groups, yet such groups were to be found in numerous parts of the world, and Unitarians everywhere, therefore, could think of themselves as taking part in a world-wide movement in the quest of truth and in the deepening of the religious life of men. It was encouraging to reflect that they were thus linked up with religious forces extending far and wide, and it would serve to relieve them of the feeling of isolation or insignificance. He went on to say that the great need of the time was that religion should be felt as a reality in the lives of men. The old foundations of "orthodoxy" were crumbling away, and there was a growing feeling that the Church to-day was wanting in sincerity. This was felt by some of the teachers of the Church, for only recently a Cambridge Professor had written a letter to the Press protesting that the recital of the Athanasian creed even once a year was an act of dishonesty. (This letter is referred to in Mr. Dunbar's address.) When the note of sincerity is once more struck, said Mr. Bowie, we should witness an increasing interest in matters of religion, and the growth, not of uniformity—uniformity was not a thing to be desired—but of a spirit of unity and co-operation in men of diverse faiths and beliefs.

At the close of Mr. Bowie's address the two papers on "The Message of Unitarians to the Present Age" were read. Mr. Dunbar's address appears in full in another part of the magazine. Mr. Williams, who spoke from notes, said, in the course of a thoughtful address, that a message implied a messenger, and Unitarian Christianity required that its messenger should convey his message through his own personality. Unitarianism was not merely a body of opinion : it was first of all a moral and spiritual force to be realized in oneself, and thus transmitted from one person to another. Could they rise to the height of this demand ? Had they sufficient courage and fortitude to live up to their principles ? The impression Unitarians appeared to make on their "orthodox" friends was that they were simply "intellectualists," interested purely in points of controversy. Principal Selbie had recently referred to Unitarianism as a religion of the head rather than the heart. How far was this true of them as Unitarians? So far as their principles were concerned, the principles of that Asso-

ciation, these were perfectly simple and straightforward ; the charge neither of dogmatism nor of pure intellectualism could be brought against them. Neither he thought could it with truth be brought against Unitarians themselves. There was need to-day, he said, in concluding, both of concentration and conciliation—concentration upon vital Christian truths, not simply in the sense that they require to be re-stated, but also that they need to be made active and living principles in human lives ; and conciliation in the sense that opposing forces should be united in a common effort to promote human brotherhood and both the physical and spiritual salvation of the race.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman for presiding, and to the ladies who had prepared and served tea at the meeting, was cordially passed, on the motion of the Rev. M. Watkins, and the meeting was then brought to a close by the Benediction, pronounced by the Rev. M. S. Dunbar. J. W.

## SUSTENTATION FUND.

To the Editor of *The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian.*

Sir,

Will you again kindly allow me to remind ministers and congregational treasurers that the new Fund comes into operation this year, and to point out that to enable ministers to qualify for the grant from the Fund, *congregations* are required to pay 5% on the total income of the minister, as minister of the congregation, into the Fund. As I mentioned in a previous note, this qualifying contribution is to be paid in two equal instalments, the first on or before the 1st of June, and the second on or before the 1st of December in each year. The first half of this year's contribution will therefore be due on or before the 1st of June, 1914, and should be forwarded *before* that date to the Treasurer of the Fund, Mr. J. R. Rankin, Kirkcubbin, Co. Down, together with a statement of the minister's income, duly signed by minister and congregational treasurer. Application forms have already been forwarded to the officials of the different congregations, and some have been returned. Additional forms may be obtained from myself. A statement signed as above, however, will be sufficient.

The Sustentation Fund Committee earnestly hope that all congregations will make an effort to raise the qualifying contribution this year, so that all the ministers may this year enjoy the small increase in their incomes which the Fund was formed to provide.

Those whom it concerns will kindly note that grants cannot be made out of the Fund unless the conditions stated above are complied with.

Yours, etc.,

Joseph Worthington,
Knock, Belfast.

## OBITUARY.

Robert James M'Mordie, M.A., M.P., Lord Mayor of Belfast, died rather suddenly on 25th March, aged 65. He had gone to the South of France to enjoy a little relaxation, but owing to certain aspects of public affairs he returned, leaving Mrs. M'Mordie behind, and passed away from heart failure on the day following his home-coming. He had attained the unique distinction of being not only Parliamentary Representative for a Belfast constituency, but also of being elected four times in succession to the Civic Chair. He was the youngest of the four sons of Rev. John Andrew M'Mordie, of Seaforde, Co. Down, of whom our own honest, genial hearted Rev. John M'Caw was a college friend, and who said of him: "an honester man never threw coat over his head than you, John Andrew M'Mordie." His mother was a Miss Kirkpatrick, of Seaforde. She was a woman of marked individuality of character, very well read, especially in modern political history, so that Colonel Forde M.P., felt himself justified in describing her family, which included two daughters as "a nest of young Radicals." Her sons all attained positions of distinction—David as an engineer in Australia, while William was instrumental,

in conjunction with Mr. Benn, of Glenravel and Belfast, in establishing the Samaritan Hospital, of which he was Chief Medical Officer for his lifetime practically, and where hundreds of women found such treatment as saved them from early death, or dragging out a miserable existence. It was a traditional custom that the eldest son of the different branches of the M'Mordie family should be named "Hans," a custom not observed by the Lord Mayor, whose only son is named Shan. The Lord Mayor and his eldest brother, Hans, became solicitors, and had their chief offices in Belfast—the latter, after some years, during which he had been much occupied in the Land Courts, becoming ultimately a barrister. Hans, it is only the simple truth to say, was a most brilliant orator, especially when from platform and in Court he pleaded the farmers' cause. Even yet, in many parts of his native county, as in Co. Antrim, the tones of that fiery, but also sweetly, pathetic voice, are remembered.

It is interesting, as illustrating the changes brought about by time, to refer to a Co. Down election mentioned recently in a Belfast paper, an election in which the then Lord Castlereagh was opposed in the Liberal interest generally by Mr., afterwards Mr. Justice Andrews. In this contest the M'Mordie brothers were conducting agents for Mr. Andrews.

It was a matter of common report at the time of the election, and was stated in as many words in print recently that in the interests of proposed legislation dear to the hearts of Catholics, a deputation, including Catholic clergymen and others, waited on the candidates, and asked them to be at least neutral if they could not support the measures then before Parliament. Mr. Andrews gave an uncompromising refusal. The Catholic vote went to his opponent, who had been pronounced by Disraeli "a promising young man," and with that vote went the representation of the constituency in Parliament. But the Unitarians, especially of Co. Down, were proud of Mr. Andrews, and the successful candidate on that occasion became "hand and glove" with the Lord Mayor, and followed his remains to their last resting place. But the M'Mordie brothers tried to advance land reform and Liberalism generally by the agency of the Press, first by printing and publishing a weekly paper called the "Down Independent," which, after some time they replaced by the "Daily Post." With special reference to the latter the Lord Mayor declared emphatically that it would make Belfast in five years as Liberal as Birmingham was then. The venture was not successful. The religious and political bigotry of Belfast was too inveterate. Needless to say, that at school and college the brothers all were distinguished, and that they won class and University honours in abundance, our lately deceased friend being particularly strong in mathematics and mathematical physics.

But overshadowed as he was by his brilliant brother, his own varied abilities were not fully recognised until of recent years. And when he was elevated to the Mayoral Chair, many of his friends feared for his success in a position admittedly difficult. But such fears were soon dissipated. His impartiality, his straightforward honesty, his quickness of discernment and kindness of heart and demeanour have never been surpassed, if they have ever been equalled, and by none have they been more appreciated than by Catholics, to whom, as a rule, he was politically so sternly opposed. He went to his grave rich in the affection and respect of the community, from the Peer to the humblest citizen of Belfast. Mr. M'Mordie was married to a good and noble woman, a daughter of Sir John Gray, a great and wealthy shipbuilder on the Tyne. She proved herself his right arm of strength in all his labours for the public good, especially labours having for their object the helping of those classes of the community least able to help themselves, and for which services the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress M'Mordie will live in the grateful remembrance of thousands. He leaves one son, Mr. Shan M'Mordie, and one daughter, married to Major

Hodgkin. To Mrs. M'Mordie and her family we tender our most earnest and respectful sympathy.

* *

MISS MARGARET ATKINSON, LARNE.

This venerable and much-loved lady passed to her well-earned rest and reward on April 1st. Connected from birth with the old Presbyterian Church, she is mourned to-day by the members thereof as though their own kith and kin. She loved her ecclesiastical home, and joined faithfully in the worship there conducted until the last Sunday but one before the end, saying on that day, with quiet triumph, as she gained the last step of the flight leading into the vestibule, "Once more." And she loved the people of the congregation, working from early life for their spiritual and moral interests in the Sunday-school, visiting the poor and afflicted, carrying comfort into and renewing hope in many a sad home and heart of all Christian denominations in town and neighbourhood. In the different charities of the town she was an indefatigable worker while strength held out, and liberal in her benefactions. And she was what we are told the Lord loves, "a cheerful giver"—to all good purposes, including those of primary education; always declaring that to contribute to such was a pleasure to her. Cheery and optimistic, she ever looked for the brighter side, and, largely gifted with the "charity that thinketh no evil," she always, if possible, took the lenient view. On Sunday, the 5th ult., fitting reference was made from the pulpit of the Old Meeting House, the service generally being suited to the sad occasion, and after the sermon the Dead March in "Saul"—only too familiar, alas!—was rendered on the organ, while a deeply-moved congregation stood with heads reverently bowed. An elder sister, Mrs. M'Cormick, survives, with whom and other relatives the community deeply sympathises.

* *

MR. JOHN NELSON.

With profound regret we announce the death of Mr. John Nelson, of Annadorn, who passed away at an advanced age on Saturday, March 28th. He was a well-known farmer and rate collector, and was esteemed by all who knew him as a man of high character, essentially kind-hearted, courteous and obliging in disposition. By his demise our church in Clough lost a staunch supporter, member and trustee. In good and bad weather Mr. Nelson attended his church regularly, and in that duty he was faithful to the end. The funeral, on the following Tuesday, to the family burying ground at Loughinisland, was very largely attended. The religious services were conducted by Revs. M. S. Dunbar (Moderator), J. H. Bibby, and J. D. Davies.

## Reports.

We regret that owing to pressure on space we are compelled to hold over till next month "Lesson Notes for Teachers," an article on "The Living Bond of the Sacrament," and Reports from Larne, Moneyrea and Templepatrick.

* *

**Unity Guild.**—The February meeting was held in Mountpottinger School-room on the 18th of that month, and took the form of the popular annual festival known as "Ladies' Night." Papers were read by Mrs. M'I. Cleland and Mrs. H. J. Rossington, bearing on "Educational Reminiscences," the first named treating the subject as "From the Teachers' Chair," and the latter "From the Student's point of view." Both papers fully maintained the high standard always looked for on these nights, and were thoroughly enjoyed by a good audience. Mrs. Cleland related some amusing anecdotes, and mentioned certain examination "howlers." She criticised the extraordinary vagaries of some parents, and also dealt with the humours of breaking-up parties. Mrs. Rossington gave an interesting resumé of student days, which she said were approached with mingled feelings after an interval of 10 or 12 years. In the discussion that followed Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., gave an account of his student days in Germany, whilst Miss I. Campbell, who approached the question from the teacher's standpoint,

expressed her sympathy with the student. Messrs. A. M'I. Cleland, G. J Hill, E. R. Jackson, and Rev. J. Worthington also took part in the discussion. The March meeting was held in York Street Lecture Hall on the 18th of the month, when Rev. A. Davison (of Dromore) read a paper on "Dr. Johnson." This interesting personality, we were told, was a devoted Churchman, a Tory, and a Jacobite. On leaving school he spent two years in his father's bookselling business. Afterwards he took up the teaching profession, and finally drifted into authorship. His first book brought him £5. A point of interest is that by virtue of his connection with the "Gentleman's Magazine," he was practically the first Parliamentary reporter. Rev. H. J. Rossington gave an interesting account of a pilgrimage to Lichfield, which is so inseparably connected with Dr. Johnson, and made mention of his great tea-drinking powers.

The annual meeting took place in Rosemary Hall, on Wednesday evening, 8th April. Proceedings opened with an excellent paper on the Bronte Country, by Miss Greenfield, which was much appreciated. An interval for tea followed, and the election of officers for the coming year was then entered upon. It was felt that measures must be taken to revive interest in the work of the Guild. To this end Mr. E. R. Jackson was unanimously appointed President with a strong and representative Committee to support him. An interesting summer programme is in preparation, and it is sincerely hoped that this will prove attractive to the young people connected with our churches. Those desiring to join the Guild or take part in the summer excursions may obtain full particulars from their ministers or local secretaries.

**Ballee.**—The annual meeting of the congregation was held on the first Sunday of April, and was very largely attended. The usual reports were presented and passed for audit. The various committees were thanked and re-appointed. A special resolution of thanks was carried with much fervour to Mr. Robert M'Cullen for his services at the organ. It was reported that the Ballee contribution to the new Sustentation Fund now reaches about £200. Rev. Mr. Bibby, who presided, reminded them of the gift of the land he had made to the church, and his reason for doing so. In addition, he announced that he had given a newly issued bank share, whose present value is about £57, to be added to the invested funds of the congregation.

**Ballyclare.**—A series of special evening discourses have been delivered here during the last few weeks, explaining our position. Handbills were previously distributed throughout the town, and large posters prominently displayed, with gratifying results. Many from other congregations attended—in fact, over the advertised period the numbers attending increased Sunday by Sunday. The Ulster Unitarian Association gave their leaflets for distribution, as did also the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. The aim of the discourses has been to show that our faith is but the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The sermons consequently were constructive, but incidentally (and only where necessary) had to turn aside and show where we undoubtedly differed from certain orthodox doctrines. We are by no means sanguine, but fairly hopeful that good will result from this experiment. We shall probably, and commencing next autumn, make the evening service a feature. The subjects dealt with were: God, The Bible, Jesus, Heaven, Hell, Original Sin, and Prayer.

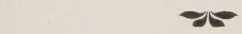
**Cairncastle.**—A concert and entertainment was given in the Cairncastle Lecture Hall, on Friday, 13th March, by members of the Old Meeting House. The programme included, besides many songs, a pianoforte solo, three sketches and three recitations. The titles of the sketches were, "The Wrong Box," "Advertising for a Husband," "and "Granny." One of the recitations was a verse rendering of Aesop's Fable about the traveller and the sun and wind, four girls taking part in it. The following are the names of those who contributed to the programme :—Mr. James M'Clelland and Miss Annie Jane M'Clelland, Mr. Hugh Duffin and Miss Sarah

Duffin, Mr. James Park and Miss Agnes Park, Mr. Bruce Robinson and Miss Sophia Robinson, Mr. James Maxwell and Miss Annie Maxwell, Misses Laura and Miss Ellen Lusk, and Miss Mary Buchanan, and the accompanists were Mrs. Thompson and Miss Nannie Crawford. The audience was large and appreciative.

**Dunmurry.**—The congregation of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Dunmurry, gave a reception to the Rev. J. A. Kelly and Mrs. Kelly on 17th April, on the occasion of their marriage, and made them the recipients of a presentation. The pleasing function took place in the local Courthouse, which was decorated with flags, plants and flowers, and presented a very attractive appearance. Tea was provided at seven o'clock, the teamakers being—Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Scott, Mrs. W. Martin, Mrs. M'Comb, Mrs. Martin (junior), Mrs. M'Comb, Miss Roberts, Miss Carmichael, Miss Montgomery, Miss Hall, and Miss Gibson. Subsequently the chair was taken by the Rev. Alexander Gordon, and the attendance, which was large, included Revs. Benjamin Banks, T. S. Hall, T. H. Blackburn, Robert Davey, Thomas Dunkerley, William Weatherall, M. Watkins, G. L. Phelps, F. Woolley, A. O. Ashworth, G. Slipper, E. H. Pickering; Messrs. D. P. Gaussen, M.D., ; S. R. Hunter, M.D. ; J. R. Bristow, R. J. Yarr, Eustace Gordon, W. R. Hicks, H. C. Hicks, K. M. Moore, J. H. Chambers, R. Chambers, C. Chambers, J. Grey, James Steele, A. R. Scott, R. Martin, Thomas Roberts, Walter Roberts, and R. E. M. Scott, secretary.

**Holywood.**—The first of what we hope will be annual Sunday-school services were held on Sunday, April 5th, morning and evening. There were practically full attendances of scholars, and the services were bright and enjoyable. The special hymns were well sung by the scholars, and at the evening service an anthem by the choir. The Rev. H. J. Rossington conducted the services, and his interesting and appropriate addresses were highly appreciated.

**Mountpottinger.**—The choir gave a very successful concert and dramatic entertainment in the schoolroom on February 26th. It is understood that the proceeds are to defray the cost of summer excursion, and if the financial result is in keeping with the excellence of the fare provided, the success of the excursion should be assured. A very pretty item was the opening of the programme by song scena entitled "Bo-Peep," which was presented by Miss Daisy Newman and a chorus. Miss Elcoate sang in her accustomed pleasing style, and Mr. Doherty scored a great success with his humorous songs. Miss Savage gained appreciation for her interpretation of Irish Dances, whilst Miss Emily Crooks satisfied the audience with her elocutionary efforts. The accompanists were Miss M. Morrow, L.I.A.M., and Miss Savage. The dramatic sketches were both of a light version, being entitled "Our Betty," and "Suffragettes." Unexpected talent was revealed in more than one instance. Where all did so well, it must suffice to say that the parts were taken by Misses Maggie and Eva Neill, Hettie Smyth, Edith Malcolm, Nellie Allen, and Sarah Townsley. As a fitting close to the programme, an action song entitled "The Dreamland Train," was rendered by two charming little girls, in the persons of the Sisters Newman. Rev. J. Worthington, B.A., presided over the gathering, and was also responsible, with Messrs. Malcolm, Oliver, and Braithwaite, for the lighting and stage arrangements. Miss L. Townsley very effectively acted as manageress in the front of the house. Miss Magill was kind enough to lend a piano of superb tone and pitch. Last, but by no means least, comes Miss M. Morrow, L.I.A.M. (the church organist), on whom devolved the training of the young people in the action songs and sketches. With what measure of success this was accomplished can be judged by the unstinted applause evoked.



True hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun.
— *Aughan.*

## MARRIAGE.

WALLACE—MAHON.—March 5th, at York Street Non-Subscribing Church, by the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., Alexander Wallace, Ballymenoch, Holywood, to Annie Martin, second daughter of the late Mr. Francis Mahon, Raloo, Co. Antrim.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